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Intelligence Isn't All Spying

The Central Intelligence Agency has been taking a severe beating for its alleged failure to provide the administration with accurate information on Cuba, but at this point no one outside the higher echelons of government can say to what extent the failure of the Cuban invasion was CIA's fault. Not until the special study to be made by Gen. Maxwell Taylor and others is completed will we know much about this — and perhaps not even then.

There is, however, some misconception of the role of an intelligence agency. Most persons apparently assume that it is all cloak-and-dagger stuff, with spies skulking behind every building. Spying is an important part of any intelligence office's activities, but it is the smaller part. William H. McGovern, now a professor of political science at Northwestern University but a top intelligence officer in World War II, says in his new book, "Strategic Intelligence and the State of Tomorrow," that no more than 20 per cent of the information gathered for the purpose of making strategic estimates in World War II came from secret sources. The rest was culled from commercial and industrial publications, technical manuals and year books — in short,

from sources readily available to almost anyone.

The deficiencies in our own intelligence services seem less a failure to dig out secret information than they are a failure to evaluate accurately the information gathered. There is reason to believe, for instance, that the value of Manuel Ray's underground forces in Cuba was vastly underrated. At any rate, Ray was taken out of the play in this country and his apparatus never was pressed into action.

Conceivably we may need more and better spies. But we definitely need more accurate evaluation of all available data at the higher levels in government—right up to and including President Kennedy.